Feeling heard

EDUCATIONAL THEORY

FEELING HEARD: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION, TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING, AND PRODUCTIVE STRUGGLE

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Abstract. Developments in international inclusive education policy, including in prominent UN documents, often refer to the aim of a *quality* education *for all*. Yet, it remains unclear: What exactly is meant by quality education? And, under what conditions are quality educational experiences possible for all learners? In this essay, Diana Murdoch, Andrea English, Allison Hintz, and Kersti Tyson bring together research on inclusive education with philosophy of transformative learning, in particular John Dewey and phenomenology, to further the discussion on these two questions. The authors argue that teacher–learner relationships, of a particular kind, are necessary for fostering environments wherein all learners have access to quality educational experiences associated with *productive struggle* as an indispensable aspect of transformative learning processes. They define such relationships as "educational relationships that support students to *feel heard*." In developing their argument, the authors first analyze the concept of productive struggle, an aspect of learning increasingly recognized in research and policy as an indicator of quality education. Second, they discuss three necessary, though not sufficient, conditions for the teacher to cultivate educational relationships that support students to feel heard. Third, they draw out connections between environments that support feeling heard and those that support productive struggle, and they discuss teachers' challenges and risk-taking in creating such environments. The authors close with a discussion of implications for international policy, practice, and research.

Key Words. transformative learning; inclusive education; productive struggle; John Dewey; reflective teaching; teacher listening; educational policy; educational relationships

While "inclusive education" can be understood in various ways, in prominent and influential UN documents (most recently, the 2015 Incheon Declaration,[1]

1. UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, ED-2016/WS/28 (2016), https://iite.unesco.org/publications/education-2030-incheon-declaration-framework-action-towards-inclusive-equitable-quality-education-lifelong-learning/.

the 2018 Brussels Declaration,[2] and the 2019 Cali Commitment[3]), it refers to the notion of a *quality* education *for all*, with the aim of advancing more equitable societies and improving the life chances of millions of vulnerable and marginalized people worldwide. Increasingly around the world, emerging policies for "inclusive education," while containing regional variations, can be seen to collectively support long-standing education philosophical ideas around the need for educators to provide all learners access to rich, meaningful learning experiences. While these developments in inclusive education policy are important, in the above formulation, it remains unclear: what exactly is meant by quality education? And, if such policies are to be implemented in practice, it must also be asked, under what conditions are quality educational experiences possible for all learners?

In this essay, we further the discussion on these two questions.[4] We argue that teacher–learner relationships, of a particular kind, are necessary for fostering environments wherein all learners have opportunities to access the quality educational experiences associated with *struggling productively* as an indispensable aspect of

2. UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Global Education Meeting 2018: Brussels Declaration, ED-2018/GEM/1 (2018), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366394?posInSet=1&queryId=f00bbeb5-caf0-495d-9782-e4caad1e9e0f.

3. UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Cali Commitment to Equity and Inclusion in Education, ED/ESC/IGE/2019/10 (2019), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370910.

4. Parts of this paper were accepted after peer review to the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA, April 2020, before the conference was canceled due to Covid-19: Diana Murdoch and Andrea R. English, "Transformative Learning and Inclusive Education: Perspectives on Educating the Whole Person," http://tinyurl.com/venqqbj; and Kersti Tyson, Andrea R. English, and Allison Hintz, "Measuring the Environment, Not the Child: Teachers' Pedagogical Listening and Rehumanizing Teaching and Learning," http://tinyurl.com/wo5el4z. In addition, parts of this paper were presented at the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, Roehampton Branch Seminar Series in July 2020.

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transformative learning processes. We define such relationships as "educational relationships that support students to *feel heard*."

The phenomena of "feeling heard" is elusive. For those who have experienced being in a relationship in which they felt heard, they may have embodied knowledge of this feeling, knowing it is significant, and is much more than just having one's words acoustically heard. Beyond this, for the person who *felt* heard, it can be difficult to explain the corresponding embodied human phenomenon. It is equally difficult to describe philosophically or measure empirically. Yet recently, in philosophical and empirical research, scholars have recognized that "feeling heard" is important in education. For example, a study of teacher and learner listening in classrooms by two of the present coauthors (Allison Hintz and Kersti Tyson) concludes that, whether the speaker (that is, the learner) "feels heard" by teachers or their peers, is just as important in classroom communication as is "what is said, what the listener hears [and] how the listener responds."[5] Additionally, in philosophy of education, Huey-li Li emphasizes "the right" of those who have been silenced and marginalized to "be heard."[6] This point is taken up by Michelle Forrest, who notes that requiring marginalized students to speak, does not ensure they will be heard, and such force may in fact marginalize them further.[7]

Following such lines of thinking, we believe that whether and how students are supported to "feel heard" can be an important criterion for defining the type of educational relationships that are needed to foster environments in which all learners can productively struggle. In this essay, we bring together research on inclusive education and philosophical ideas associated with transformative learning, with the aim of beginning to delimit such educational relationships. Our argument makes two key moves. First, before examining such educational relationships, we focus on analyzing the concept of productive struggle, an aspect of learning increasingly recognized in research and policy as an indicator of quality education. Our aim here is to provide a richer understanding of this concept by drawing out its embodied affective dimensions and connecting it to a long history of philosophy of education on transformative learning. Second, we discuss three necessary, though not sufficient, conditions for the teacher to cultivate educational relationships that support students to feel heard: (1) the teacher's recognition of the "perfectibility" of all learners; (2) the teacher's "disposition as a listener"; and (3) the teacher's capacity to "build community" in the classroom. As we discuss each of these conditions in turn, we purposefully select excerpts of interview data with young people from recent empirical research into inclusive education

5. Allison Hintz and Kersti Tyson, "Complex Listening: Supporting Students to Listen as Mathematical Sense-Makers," *Mathematical Thinking and Learning* 17, no. 4 (2015): 298, 322.

6. Huey-li Li, "Silences and Silencing Silences," in *Philosophy of Education 2001*, ed. Suzanne Rice, (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 2002), 157, 162.

7. Michelle Forrest, "Practising Silence in Teaching," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 47, no. 4 (2013): 610.

in a Scottish secondary school.[8] We use these excerpts to illuminate what it means for students to feel heard. While this research was not conducted with the framework of productive struggle and transformative learning in mind, one of the present coauthors (Diana Murdoch), who conducted the research interviews, offers additional interpretive insight into these students' lives, in relation to the three conditions for the teacher we are developing here. Third, we draw out connections between environments that support feeling heard and those that support productive struggle, and discuss the challenge and risk involved in teaching that creates such environments. We close the essay with considerations of how "feeling heard" can be an important category for guiding policy and practice on transformative learning for all learners within inclusive education environments.

A Note on the Term "Inclusive Education"

Since inclusion and inclusive education are both contested concepts and it is widely argued that they are subject to a lack of clarity,[9] we offer a brief note on the history of the idea and on how we are using the terms here. While there is no single clear, universally accepted definition of inclusive education, there have been numerous attempts at capturing the essence of this complex idea. These ideas have been in part influenced by medical advances, burgeoning civil and social rights movements, an increased awareness of the rights of those who are considered "disabled" to have a say in their own lives, alongside changes brought about in education systems, where many had been segregated for too long. In the Western world, "inclusion" was first and foremost part of policies, by which those previously educated in alternative and separate provision were to be brought into the mainstream or common school. In the United Kingdom, a key document in this history came in 1978, namely, the so-called Warnock Report,[10] which was hugely influential in raising awareness and provoking debate about who should be included in what Warnock was later to term "the common educational project."[11] Parallel movements in the United States context were later encapsulated in "No Child Left Behind"[12] and the principle of the "least restrictive environment,"[13] and

8. Diana Murdoch, "Lived Experience and Inclusive Education: An Exploration of the Phenomenon of Inclusive Education in the Life World of Young People, Parents and Teachers" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2019).

9. Linda J. Graham and Roger Slee, "An Illusory Interiority: Interrogating the Discourse/s of Inclusion," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 40, no. 2 (2008): 277–293.

10. Great Britain, *Special Educational Needs: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education of Handicapped Children and Young People* (The Warnock Report). (London: HMSO, 1978).

11. Mary Warnock and Brahm Norwich, *Special Educational Needs: A New Look*, ed. Lorella Terzi (London: Continuum Books, 2010), 33.

12. *No Child Left Behind* (*NCLB*) *Act of 2001*, Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 101, Stat. 1425 (2002) United States Congress (107th, 1st Session: 2001). The full text of NCLB is available at https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/house-bill/1/text.

13. The principle of the "least restrictive environment" has been encapsulated in U.S. educational law and policy for a number of years, and it has undergone a number of amendments over time. In 1975, the

by UNESCO in the "Education for All" initiative.[14] The Warnock Report exposed a system where many young people were *unnecessarily* excluded from the sorts of educational opportunities available to most young people, receiving instead some sort of education or training in so-called "special" schools or units, which had a life-long limiting effect on their present and future opportunities. Among the report's conclusions was that many of the young people in segregated education on account of perceived "disability" could and should be *included* in the educational opportunities available to most young people.

In the context of this essay, as mentioned above, we draw on Murdoch's empirical research with young people from a Scottish secondary school, and we consider the idea of inclusive education primarily in that context. In former times, the young people in this research might all have been in an alternative or special educational environment, but they are now educated in the mainstream or regular school. This is on account of the terms of the policy on "the presumption of mainstreaming," the main education policy in Scotland.[15] Under the terms of this policy, it is assumed that almost all children and young people will attend the mainstream school provision, with additional support where necessary. The young people in this research project were all identified by the host school as having "additional support needs." In Scotland, the term "additional support needs" replaced the term "special educational needs" (SEN),[16] which was widely used in the United Kingdom.[17] With the idea of *additional support needs*, Scotland extended the range of issues recognized as creating potential barriers to children within the educational system to include factors such as family circumstances, social deprivation, language, social, and emotional difficulties, as well as physical disability and medical diagnoses. Moreover, a system of tiered additional support

United States Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Pub. L. No. 94-142, § 89, Stat. 773 [1975]). This legislation has been updated and amended a number of times, including through passage of the 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Pub. L. No. 101-476, § 104 Stat. 1142), the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (Pub. L. No. 108-446, § 118 Stat. 2647), and the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (Pub. L. No. 114-95, § 129, Stat. 1802).

14. World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs. *World declaration on education for all and framework for action to meet basic learning needs adopted by the World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Jomtien, Thailand, 5–9 March 1990* (New York: Inter-Agency Commission [UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank] for the World Conference on Education for All, 1990).

15. Scottish Executive, *Standard in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000*: *Guidance on the Presumption of Mainstreaming* (Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2002).

16. In Scotland, the term "additional support needs" has been used since 2004, when the *Education, (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004* was passed. Before this, Scotland, like England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, had used the term "special educational needs," which was introduced by the Warnock Report in 1978.

17. A slightly adapted term, "special educational needs and disabilities" (SEND), is now used in England, but the term SEN is remains in use in Northern Ireland. In December 2017, Wales replaced SEN with the term "additional learning needs" (ALN). The different terms are indicative of the wide range of policies, practices, and provision across the four nations of the United Kingdom.

was put in place, according to which initial responsibility for supporting all students lies with each classroom teacher, with additional internal and external expertise offered by others, as needed.[18]

Productive Struggle in Transformative Learning Processes: A Focus on Embodied Affect

In recent years, a significant body of research, in particular in mathematics education, has highlighted that supporting "productive struggle" is an equity issue, and that all learners need to be given access to opportunities to struggle productively during mathematics learning.[19] In this context, researchers have offered theoretical distinctions between "productive struggle" and "unproductive struggle" and, further, have used this distinction to empirically examine the teacher's role in supporting productive struggle.[20] Such studies have found that quality mathematics teaching engages students in "productive struggle" by eliciting students' thinking around the mathematics that they do not yet understand, or are coming to understand, thereby getting learners to explicate their confusions, puzzlements, doubts and the like, verbally or in writing. Additionally, such research notes, that teachers' responses that reinforce students' "unproductive struggle" are those that either simplify the task, thereby underchallenging learners, or tell learners the right answer.[21] Importantly, the former has been identified as the type of mathematics

18. Scottish Government, *The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Acts 2004 & 2009: Consultation on Changes to the Secondary Legislation and Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice* (Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2009), https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20150218142312/http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/11/03140104/0.

19. Angela T. Barlow, Natasha E. Gerstenschlager, Jeremy F. Strayer, Alyson E. Lischka, D. Christopher Stevens, Kristin S. Hartland, and J. Christopher Willingham, "Scaffolding for Access to Productive Struggle," *Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School* 23, no. 4 (2018): 202–207; Sararose D. Lynch, Jessica H. Hunt, and Katherine E. Lewis, "Productive Struggle for All: Differentiated Instruction," *Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School* 23, no. 4 (2018): 194–201; Cynthia Townsend, David Slavit, and Amy Roth McDuffie, "Supporting All Learners in Productive Struggle," *Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School* 23, no. 4 (2018): 216–224; Crystal Kalinec-Craig, "The Rights of the Learner: A Framework for Promoting Equity through Formative Assessment in Mathematics Education," *Democracy and Education* 25, no. 2 (2017): article 5; Jo Boaler and Robin Anderson, "Considering the Rights of Learners in Classrooms: The Importance of Mistakes and Growth Assessment Practices," *Democracy and Education* 26, no. 2 (2018): article 7; Jo Boaler, *Mathematical Mindsets: Unleashing Students' Potential through Creative Math, Inspiring Messages and Innovative Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016); and Allison Hintz, Kersti Tyson, and Andrea English, "Actualizing the Rights of the Learner: The Role of Pedagogical Listening," *Democracy and Education* 26, no. 2 (2018): article 8.

20. See, for example, James Hiebert and Douglas Grouws, "The Effects of Classroom Mathematics Teaching on Students' Learning," in *Second Handbook of Research on Mathematics Teaching and Learning: A Project of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics*, ed. Frank K. Lester Jr. (Charlotte, NC: Information Age, 2007); Hiroko K. Warshauer, "Productive Struggle in Middle School Mathematics Classrooms," *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education* 18, no. 4 (2014): 375–400; Kalinec-Craig, "The Rights of the Learner"; Hiroko K. Warshauer, Christina Starkey, Christine A. Herrera, and Shawnda Smith, "Developing Prospective Teachers' Noticing and Notions of Productive Struggle with Video Analysis in a Mathematics Content Course," *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education* (2019); Hintz, Tyson, and English, "Actualizing the Rights of the Learner"; and Boaler and Anderson, "Considering the Rights of Learners in Classrooms."

21. Warshauer, "Productive Struggle in Middle School Mathematics Classrooms."

teaching that supports metacognition, critical thinking, and learning with understanding, whereas the latter has been identified as undesirable because it leads to rote memorization and merely fast execution of mathematical procedures without conceptual understanding.[22] Further still, such research has made clear that learning with understanding via productive struggle matters for developing the learner's mathematical identity.[23] The significance of these research advances is shown by the fact that teacher support for learners' *productive struggle* has been codified into policy on quality mathematics education.[24]

Several features of this expanding discourse are important for our aim here of positioning productive struggle within the larger discourse of transformative learning. For one, there is a focus on the *process* of learning, not merely the outcome. For another, the category of "unproductive struggle" is useful in that it helps to delimit the type of teaching that seeks to "pour in" information to learners' minds — what Dewey criticized as a feature of "traditional education,"[25] and Paulo Freire admonished as mere "banking education"[26] — which has a long-history in mathematics teaching in schools. And, importantly, this discourse is drawing attention to the connections between meaningful learning and issues of inclusion by identifying productive struggle as an indicator of quality education that needs to be offered to all learners.

The focus of such discourse in mathematics education has largely been on the cognitive aspect of struggle. Here, we are calling for greater attention to understanding what it means to educate the learner as a whole person, in particular attending to the embodied affective dimensions of learners' struggle that, just as cognitive dimensions, are part of transformative learning processes.[27] On our view, these affective dimensions motivate a stronger need for educational relationships

22. Ibid.

23. Boaler, *Mathematical Mindsets*.

24. National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, *Principles to Actions: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All* (Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2014). The term "productive struggle" is used specifically in the U.S. mathematics education policy context. That said, Scotland's educational policy around mathematics education uses similar terms, for example, stating that effective teaching includes using learners' "misconceptions and wrong answers as opportunities to improve and deepen learners' understanding of maths." Education Scotland, "Curriculum for Excellence — Mathematics: Principles and Practice" (Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2012), 2, https://education.gov.scot/Documents/mathematics-pp.pdf; and Education Scotland, "Benchmarks: Numeracy and Mathematics" (Edinburgh, UK: Scottish Government, 2017), https://education.gov.scot/nih/Documents/NumeracyandMathematicsBenchmarks.pdf.

25. See, for example, John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (1916) in *John Dewey: The Middle Works, 1899–1924*, vol. 9, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008).

26. See, for example, Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Seabury Press, 1973).

27. In "Productive Struggle in Middle School Mathematics Classrooms," Warshauer notes that engaging in the cognitive demand of productive struggle can include "anxiety." In "Supporting All Learners in Productive Struggle," Townsend, Slavit, and McDuffie mention that support for social and emotional

wherein students are supported to feel heard, because these affective dimensions can create an obstacle that inhibits or prevents students from actively engaging in struggle during classroom learning. Before discussing educational relationships, we first address what we mean by affective dimensions of productive struggle and why these pose a risk for students. To do this, we delve into the philosophical roots of the concept of productive struggle and its connection to the nature of human learning as transformative.

The Embodied Affective Dimensions of Productive Struggle

The notion that learning does not merely refer to an "outcome," but rather to a process that involves "struggle" in which one engages effortfully to understand something unfamiliar, is not new. Indeed, a long history of philosophical considerations of struggle in learning have highlighted its embodied affective dimensions, albeit in different ways. For example, in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, the prisoner, who is attempting to see "the light" outside the cave, goes through a difficult search to understand the new objects of his surroundings, which includes the experience of pain in response to the glare of light in his eyes; he then gradually comes to partial understandings before he reaches a fully transformed view of himself and the world.[28] In Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile, or on Education*, the idea of learning in the realm of sense perception necessarily involves the infant Emile's *own* physical effort to reach new objects, such as a ball (as opposed to the ball being brought to Emile by the teacher), in order to gain knowledge of his world.[29] This effort is associated with suffering initial disappointment when the infant, who cannot yet crawl, discovers that he does not have the capacity to reach the ball in his sights. In the German tradition of philosophy of education, J. F. Herbart discusses how the "inner struggle" associated with moral decision-making involves the learner's existential experience of countering self-interest, an experience that is so forceful it can threaten "mental" and "bodily health."[30] John Dewey, influenced by these thinkers, embeds the idea of struggle into his understanding of human learning as a transformative process in which both self and world change.[31] We focus here on

aspects, not just cognitive aspects, of productive struggle is needed (224). In this essay, we seek to further draw out these issues.

28. Plato, *The Republic* (New York: Basic Books, 1968)

29. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education* (1764), trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books 1979).

30. Johann Friedrich Herbart, "The Science of Education" (1806), in *The Science of Education, Its General Principles Deduced from Its Aim, and The Aesthetic Revelation of the World*, trans. Henry M. Felkin and Emmie Felkin (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1902), 204.

31. One of the present coauthors, Andrea English, has closely examined Dewey's notion of struggle, along with related notions of discontinuity in human experience of transformative learning and teaching, in relation to the work of Plato and Rousseau; within the German tradition of *Bildung* (especially Herbart) and the American pragmatist tradition; and in relation to contemporary thinkers on transformative learning and *Umlernen*. See Andrea R. English, *Discontinuity in Learning: Dewey, Herbart and Education as Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013; Andrea R. English, "Interruption and the In-Between: Dewey and Buck on Learning and Transformation," in *Lernen aus Erfahrung: Anschlüsse*

key aspects of Dewey's theory of learning in order, first, to identify the affective dimensions of productive struggle in learning and, then, to distinguish these from affect associated with what we call a "destructive struggle."

Dewey's notion of learning as a "reflective, aesthetic experience"[32] calls attention to the structure of human learning in a way that is significant for understanding the nature and role of struggle in learning. He writes that learning involves not only "doing" (taking an action in the world) and "undergoing" (suffering the response from the world) but also, importantly, the individual's reflection on the connections between what was done and what was undergone. Giving the simple example of a child touching his finger to a flame, Dewey articulates that such a reflective connection would amount to the child understanding that the action of touching a finger to flame implies the consequence of undergoing the pain of a burn.[33] Such learning as a "reflective, aesthetic experience" involves not only reflective thinking, but also affective dimensions. In such experiences the learner is engaged in a particular type of interaction between self and world, that begins with the learner "wrestling" with ideas "first hand" in a way that interrupts the otherwise smooth flow of the learner's experience, because the world — new ideas, objects, or interactions — does not conform to his or her expectations.[34] This interruption, or "discontinuity" in experience,[35] incites a state of doubt, uncertainty, confusion, or difficulty which is *felt*.[36] Dewey underscores that such feelings of

an Günther Buck [Learning from Experience: Connections to Günther Buck], eds. Sabrina Schenk and Torben Pauls (Berlin: Schöningh, 2014); and Dietrich Benner and Andrea English, "Critique and Negativity: Towards the Pluralisation of Critique in Educational Practice, Theory and Research," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 38, no. 3 (2004): 409–428. For a discussion of the contemporary landscape of discourse on transformation and the meaning of transformative education, see Douglas Yacek, "Transformation and Education," in *Philosophy: Education*, ed. Bryan R. Warnick and Lynda Stone (Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan, 2017), 205–220. For connections between Dewey and the German tradition of *Bildung* and *Erziehung*, see Dietrich Benner, "John Dewey, a Modern Thinker: On Education (as *Bildung* and *Erziehung*) and Democracy (as a Political System and a Mode of Associated Living)," trans. Andrea R. English and Aline Nardo, in *John Dewey's Democracy and Education: A Centennial Handbook*, ed. Leonard Waks and Andrea R. English (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 263–279; and Andrea English and Christine Doddington, "Dewey, Aesthetic Experience, and Education for Humanity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Dewey*, ed. Steven Fesmire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 410–422.

32. Here, we purposely combine two terms used by Dewey: he referred to "reflective experience" in many of his works, including *Democracy and Education*, and he later used "aesthetic experience," especially in *Art as Experience*. See Dewey, *Democracy and Education*; and John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (1934) in *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925–1953*, vol. 10, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008). We use this combined term because we refer in this essay to both of Dewey's usages and also to works that address each of these terms. On the links between Dewey's terms, see English and Doddington, "Dewey, Aesthetic Experience, and Education for Humanity."

33. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 146.

34. Ibid., 167; see also 188.

35. On this concept, see English, *Discontinuity in Learning*.

36. Dewey uses these and other terms to describe this experience as part of what he calls incomplete or "indeterminate" situations. See, for example, Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, esp. chap. 11; John Dewey, *How We Think* (1933), in *John Dewey: The Later Works 1925–1953*, vol. 8, ed. Jo Ann

uncertainty are not "cognitive"; rather, they are "existential" and can be likened to being on "unsure footing."[37] If one is to truly learn in the sense of having a "reflective experience," then one should not ignore or explain away situations in which one's embodied experience of the world does not conform to expectations. Instead, as Dewey notes, one needs to recognize how such experiences call out reflective thinking to imaginatively explore wherein one's uncertainty, perplexity, or confusion lies.[38]

Such phases of uncertainty and doubt can be uncomfortable due to the fact that one knows he or she has reached a limit to established knowledge and ability, but may still be unclear about what has changed or how to move on.[39] One has reached what Freire calls a "limit situation."[40] The affective dimension of this experience of reaching one's own limits can be drawn out in the idea of "resistance." As Käte Meyer-Drawe describes, in these moments the world — that is, the new and unfamiliar object or idea in our environment — "resists" one's attempts to engage it and understand it.[41] Resistance tells the individual that routine and habit are not sufficient to engage the world because the world is not how he or she thought it was. Dewey also highlights the feeling of resistance as something lived — that is, felt — when the world appears as an "obstacle." Yet, such resistance and struggle, as Dewey underscores, is necessary for growth: it is part of a "growing life" that is "*enriched* by the state of disparity and resistance that it passes through."[42]

The idea that affective dimensions like those described by terms such as "resistance", "felt difficulty," and "discomfort" are part of learning connects to the concept of productive struggle in learning. Moments of resistance have educative meaning: these are moments in which one is engaged in a struggle to understand that which is new, unfamiliar, or even strange. This struggle is characterized by

Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 105–352; and John Dewey, "Inquiry and Indeterminateness of Situations," in *John Dewey: The Later Works 1925–1953*, vol. 15, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008) 38–40.

37. Dewey, "Inquiry and Indeterminateness of Situations," 40.

38. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 155–157; see also English, *Discontinuity in Learning*.

39. On this point, see Nicholas Burbules, "Aporias, Webs, and Passages: Doubt as an Opportunity to Learn," *Curriculum Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (2000): 171–187; Deborah Kerdeman, "Pulled Up Short: Challenging Self-Understanding as a Focus for Teaching and Learning," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 37, no. 2 (2003): 293–308; and English, *Discontinuity in Learning*.

40. Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Seabury Press, 1973). Freire is in many ways borrowing this idea from Dewey, who refers to these situations as "indeterminate" because of the uncertainty and unknowns that accompany them, as mentioned above. See also Andrea R. English, "Dialogic Teaching and Moral Learning: Self-Critique, Narrativity, Community, and 'Blind Spots,'" *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 50, no. 2 (2016): 160–176.

41. Käte Meyer-Drawe, "Lernen als Umlernen. Zur Negativität des Lernprozesses" [Learning as *Umlernen*: On the Negativity of the Learning Process], in *Lernen und Seine Horizonte: Phänomenologische Konzeptionen menschlichen Lernens - didaktische Konsequenzen*, ed. Wilfried Lippitz and Käte Meyer-Drawe (Berlin: Scriptor-Verlag, 1984), 19–45.

42. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 19–20.

the fact that even though one may know that the old ideas and ways of acting no longer suffice, one has not yet found a new way forward; that is, one is struggling to make sense of the difference between old and new. Indeed, in these moments of struggle, one finds oneself in a grey area between knowledge and ignorance, ability and inability, where one asks oneself, "What do I know? What should I do?," and "How can I move on?" Nevertheless, one has not stopped learning; rather, one inhabits an "in-between realm of learning."[43] In this in-between realm, we can describe the activity of the learner as one of being engaged in a quest to understand the discontinuities in his or her experience of the world.

This space of the in-between of learning — which connects to Dewey's concept of the "twilight zone of inquiry"[44] — can be considered a space of *productive* struggle: within this space between familiar and unfamiliar, known and unknown, the learner effortfully tries to grasp the connection between what she has *done* in the world and what she has *undergone* in consequence, and this includes experimenting with new ideas and new modes of interaction. This struggle involves a productive process of questioning what one had previously taken for granted as true, real, or justified. This questioning process not only involves questioning the conditions of one's interaction with the environment, but also self-questioning: it is an inquiry into the interruptions in one's experiences that is crucial for determining how one's established knowledge, ability, and beliefs may prove problematic given the new, unexpected situation.[45] In this sense, the struggle in learning can be described as "productive" because it is an opening for taking in the new, considering it, and trying to understand how it may indicate that one needs to make a change in thinking or action going forward. Such change may be revealed as necessary, not just for one's own sake, but for the betterment of others.

Productive and Destructive Struggle: A Necessary Distinction for Education

The affective dimensions of the struggle of learning point to the fact that such struggle can also overwhelm a person who is not prepared for or accustomed to feelings of uncertainty and resistance. For that reason, when considering struggle as something that should be cultivated in formal education by teachers, it is important to distinguish between productive and destructive struggle.[46] Although Dewey does not use the terminology of "productive" and "destructive" struggle, we use his differentiation between "educative experiences" and "miseducative

43. On this concept, see English, *Discontinuity in Learning*. See also Andrea English, "The 'In-Between' of Learning: (Re)Valuing the Process of Learning," in *Dewey in Our Time: Learning from John Dewey for Transcultural Practice*, ed. Peter Cunningham and Ruth Heilbronn (London: University College of London Institute of Education Press, 2016), 129; Andrea R. English, "John Dewey and the Role of the Teacher in a Globalized World: Imagination, Empathy, and 'Third Voice,'" *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 48, no. 10 (2016): 1046–1064; and Burbules, "Aporias, Webs, and Passages," 183.

44. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 155.

45. English and Doddington, "Dewey, Aesthetic Experience, and Education for Humanity."

46. English first made this distinction in *Discontinuity in Learning*, and we expand on it here.

experiences" to draw out this distinction.[47] Reflective, aesthetic experiences such as those mentioned above, are "educative experiences" in the fullest sense, in part because they hold us in "suspense" to struggle in the in-between realm of learning with an interest in exploring and inquiring further, so as to transform our current understandings of self and world.[48] In this sense the struggle is productive in the way we are defining the term here. Specifically, by way of such struggle, learners can arrive at a new understanding of how self and world relate and thus "widen" what Dewey calls their "meaning-horizon" in that by way of the struggle learners are led to "new perceptions of bearings and connections."[49] Such widening involves one's whole being in its cognitive, embodied affective, existential, and moral sense; it relates to who one is and to who one wants to become. As Dewey writes, widening our horizon involves "a growth of social sympathies" to that which "lies beyond our direct interests."[50] In contrast, miseducative experiences are those that limit the development of one's horizon of new meaning. Further, while miseducative experiences, like educative ones, involve "difficulties" that interrupt the individual learner, such difficulties do not "call out thinking," but instead "they overwhelm and submerge and discourage."[51] Thus, we characterize such experiences as involving *destructive*, rather than productive, struggle.

This distinction between productive and destructive struggle relates further to contemporary philosophers' discussion of different types of experiences that can either foster or hinder meaningful, educative growth and learning. Maxine Greene for example, distinguishes learning experiences that support our freedom as human beings from those that oppress. The former foster our development as persons able to imagine alternatives to our present state of knowledge, ability, and being, whereas the latter keep us "anchored" and "submerged," preventing us from developing the ability to "name alternatives, imagine a better state of things, [and] share with others a project of change."[52] Similarly, Dietrich Benner distinguishes between "affirmative" and "reflective, non-affirmative" forms of education. The former lend themselves to conformity and blind obedience, whereas the latter support critical, reflective thinking and awareness.[53] Further, Nicholas Burbules identifies different kinds of aporetic states that learners can become entangled in.

47. John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (1938), in *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925–1953*, vol. 13, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008).

48. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 155.

49. Ibid., 84. On this point, see also English and Doddington, "Dewey, Aesthetic Experience, and Education for Humanity."

50. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 155.

51. Ibid., 163. See also Dewey, *Experience and Education*.

52. Maxine Greene, *The Dialectic of Freedom* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008), 9.

53. Dietrich Benner, "Zum Kritikverständnis der Unterscheidung affirmativer und nicht-affirmativer Bildungskonzepte" [On the Understanding of Critique for Differentiating Affirmative and Non-affirmative Concepts of Education], in *Bildungstheorie und Bildungsforschung: Grundlagen-reflexionen und Anwendungsfelder, 2* (Paderborn, Germany: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2011), 179–195.

One is the feeling of being in a state of "paralysis" characterized by the sense of having "no choices, no way out." A different one is a state of doubt wherein we remain productively "stuck, in-between," as there are "too many choices, and one does not know how to recognize the path or paths that will help one to pass through." The latter state can be seen to offer "educational potential" that makes "new understanding possible."[54] Such distinctions point to the fact that while all learning may involve struggle, not all forms of struggle in learning are productive. Therefore, we view distinguishing between productive and destructive struggle within transformative learning processes vital when considering under what conditions productive, as opposed to destructive, struggle can be cultivated in formal learning environments.

The Risk of Learning through Productive Struggle

With the above lens on the embodied affective dimensions of struggle, we can see that engaging learners in learning processes that involve struggle in classrooms entails a risk for learners. A more straightforward way of understanding this risk is to see that learners are taking a risk because they are necessarily confronting something new that challenges their established knowledge and ability and thereby exposes their misconceptions, errors, and doubts to teachers or peers. A far more subtle understanding of this risk is found when we consider that identifying and articulating one's own limits — one's doubts, confusions, frustrations, and the like — as part of struggling productively can also invoke the learner's feelings of resistance, and this in two ways. For one, the learner may feel resistance in *confronting something* new that he or she does not yet understand. For another, the learner may feel resistance as an embodied, existential uncertainty involved in *confronting oneself* — that is, recognizing that one has reached a limit of one's own established knowledge and ability in a way that may cause one to question one's own identity.

From this discussion, the concept of transformative learning can be clarified. Learning by way of productive struggle that leads to transformational change to self and world involves, in some sense, not only breaking with one's established knowledge, ability, or beliefs, but also with oneself as a person. Such breaks may be experienced, Meyer-Drawe points out, as a "painful turn-around" [*schmerzhaften Umkehr*].[55] Initiation into such experiences in a classroom setting could bring about fear or anxiety, depending on the extent to which the learner has become accustomed to forms of rote learning, which do not demand the same kind of struggle.[56] Thus, engaging the learner in struggle could shut down learning rather

54. Burbules, "Aporias, Webs, and Passages," 183.

55. Käte Meyer-Drawe, *Diskurse des Lernens* [Discourses on Learning] (Munich, Germany: Wilhelm Fink, 2008), 206. See also Käte Meyer-Drawe, "Von Anderen lernen. Phänomenologische Betrachtungen in der Pädagogik" [Learning from Others: Phenomenological Considerations in Education], in *Deutsche Gegenwartspädagogik*, Bd. 2, ed. Michele Borrelli and Jörg Ruhloff (Baltmannsweiler, Germany: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren, 1996), 85–98.

56. On the negative affect of fear and its educational aspects in the work of Rousseau, Dewey, and Freire, see Andrea R. English and Barbara Stengel, "Exploring Fear: Rousseau, Dewey, and Freire on Fear and Learning," *Educational Theory* 60, no. 5 (2010): 521–542.

than open it up; equally, it could shut down the learner, causing the learner to lose a sense of self-worth or to be unable to see his or her own potential. The critical problem is that such experiences of "shut down" could be considered transformative; these *could* aide in transforming one's self-understanding, for example, by diminishing one's self-confidence in a subject area or creating a fear of the subject, such as that so commonly associated with mathematics. Significantly, however, these experiences do not include productive struggle in the way we have defined it here. We therefore argue that there is a need not only for the established categories of "productive" and "unproductive," but also of "destructive" struggle. On this view, both the qualifications of "unproductive" and "destructive" struggle delimit the types of experiences that are not associated with educationally legitimate forms of teaching.

Not only the cognitive but also the embodied affective dimensions of struggle need critical attention if educational policy and practice are to consider productive struggle realizable for all learners. Cultivating situations for productive struggle as part of transformative learning experiences for all learners in the ways described above can be difficult for teachers for many reasons. In particular, this can be difficult because it requires the teacher's deep understanding of each learner's diverse needs, so as to be able to set the right kind of challenge. We argue that one important condition for enacting teaching that cultivates productive struggle is the building up of certain kinds of teacher–learner relationships over time. We call these "educational relationships that support students to *feel heard,"* as we discuss below.

Inclusive Education, Educational Relationships, and Feeling Heard

In this section we turn to address the three conditions necessary for the teacher to cultivate educational relationships that support students to feel heard: (1) the teacher's "recognition of the perfectibility" of all learners; (2) the teacher's "disposition as a listener"; and (3) the teacher's capacity to "build community" in the classroom. As we discuss each of these conditions in turn, we incorporate the voices of students by means of vignettes, using their words from interviews on their lived experiences conducted for the research mentioned in the introduction. We have selected excerpts purposefully as a way of illustrating what such educational relationships that support students to feel heard might look like in practice.

Recognition of Perfectibility: Supporting an Asset View of All Learners

Vignette One. *Leah was almost sixteen at the time of the interviews in this research, and was in the middle of planning for her future, as her years of compulsory schooling drew to a close. In her interview, she paints a picture of the girl she had been four years previously, who was "depleted" and thought of herself as somebody whom no one liked or wanted to be near and whom even teachers had abandoned. She seemed to be defined by the label of severe dyslexia, past which no one was able to see.*

> *Leah: "I got treated differently to other people. I got picked on for being different. That basically depleted me. I didn't like what was happening. I had no friends. People didn't want to speak to me, people didn't want to be around me. They wouldn't include me. It make [sic] me feel that I wasn't like other people. I've been told since I was five I would never achieve anything."*

In her words, "I've been told since I was five I would never achieve anything," we hear how for Leah, all doors had been closed. Leah then recounts the following with respect to her experience of the move to secondary school at the age of twelve:

> *Leah: "This school totally said a different thing. They said to me we will try our best to give you somewhere. I have never been told that in my life before."*

When Leah speaks of "give you somewhere," she is talking of a future she can visualize, and of herself as someone who can have a future that it is worth having. This future is one which other people, teachers and school leaders, believe she can achieve and believe that she is worthy of all the help they will give her to do so.

The approach taken by Leah's teachers, who sought to foster her potential to grow, reflects their recognition of her perfectibility, a concept we discuss here. On our view, the teachers' recognition of all learners' perfectibility provides a foundation for the asset view of learners demanded by inclusive educational practice. This asset view of learners requires recognition by teachers that no child should be viewed as deficient, or as a problem to be fixed, but rather that "all children are worth educating, that all children can learn."[57] Inclusive education discourse has pushed strongly against common deficit views of certain groups of children, based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender, or other classifications. Such views have a long history in education in Western society. In the UK, it was not until 1970, upon passage of the Handicapped Children Education Act, that children were no longer allowed to be classified as "uneducable," that is, incapable of being educated.[58] Further such categories have been used to justify segregated education provision, remedial forms of education, or reduced and limited curricula for certain groups.[59] Here, we seek to counter such categorizations and strengthen the asset view of children through the notion of *perfectibility*.

57. Martyn Rouse and Lani Florian, *Inclusive Practice Project: Final Report* (Aberdeen, Scotland: University of Aberdeen, 2012), 10.

58. See Harry Daniels, Ian Thompson, and Alice Tawell, "After Warnock: The Effects of Perverse Incentives in Policies in England for Students with Special Educational Needs," *Frontiers in Education* 4, art. 36 (2019). The authors note that, before the Handicapped Children Education Act, children in the UK could be classified as "uneducable" based on "a measured IQ of <50" (p. 2). Today, the validity and morality of IQ tests are hotly debated.

59. Wanda J. Blanchett, "Disproportionate Representation of African American Students in Special Education: Acknowledging the Role of White Privilege and Racism," *Educational Researcher* 35, no. 6 (2006): 24–28. In this article, Blanchett discusses how racism and white privilege in the United States have contributed to the disproportionate labeling of African American students in categories of special needs. Blanchett examines the long history of referrals of African American students to particularly low-resourced special education programs on the basis of subjective decisions rather than on the basis of objective assessments designed to support children with special needs and foster their equal access to education.

This notion, going back to Rousseau's *Emile* (whose term *perfectibilité* is translated as "perfectibility" in some translations, and as "educability" or "plasticity" in others) refers to the human capacity to learn, that is, the capacity to take in something new and unexpected (a new idea, object, or interaction with another person) from one's environment, to consider it, and to respond to it in light of one's aims and desires, or, also, to reflectively change one's given aims and desires on account of the new.[60] Following Rousseau, Herbart referred to perfectibility [*Bildsamkeit*] as the "founding principle of education."[61] Dewey, influenced by these thinkers, later discussed human perfectibility, using the terms "educability" and "plasticity" to refer to the human "power of acquiring variable and novel modes of control."[62] Without explicit reference to this philosophical tradition, inclusive education literature has captured the idea of perfectibility in the term "transformability," taking the transformability of all learners as a principle of inclusive practice.[63] The concept implies that teachers recognize *all* human beings are capable of extending and widening their meaning horizons in significant ways.

Importantly, the idea of perfectibility leaves open the question of *what* each individual can learn. Perfectibility, for each of these thinkers (Rousseau, Herbart, and Dewey), is defined as "indeterminate." This does not mean that every child will learn the same things at the same rate or to the same level of ability. Rather, it is indeterminate because every individual has a right and an ability to participate and uniquely contribute to their own educational processes. This implies that educators cannot know exactly what a child can or will learn in advance; whether they will flourish in mathematics, or develop a passion for literature, is not known. In other words, the shape of the meaning horizon learners will develop is unknown for the educator.

The idea of perfectibility as *indeterminate* with respect to how a child will grow and what he or she can learn has practical implications. To illustrate this, consider what occurs in schools if teachers operate on the assumption that what a particular child, or group of children, can learn or achieve is *determinate*. For example, a teacher may believe that girls cannot excel in math. The teacher may then offer the girls in her classroom basic memorization tasks with predefined right answers, but not challenging mathematical open-ended tasks that lead to productive struggle. Moreover, the teacher by this means sends these learners the message that they are not capable of rich, transformative learning via productive struggle that can lead to critical thinking and deep understanding.

60. Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*.

61. Johann Friedrich Herbart, "Umriss pädagogischer Vorlesungen" (1835 and 1841), in *Joh. Fr. Herbart's Sämtliche Werke in Chronologischer Reihenfolge*, Bd. 10, ed. Karl Kehrbach (Langensalza: Hermann Beyer und Söhne, 1902), 65–206. See also the English translation, Johann Friedrich Herbart, *Outlines of Educational Doctrine*, trans. Alexis F. Lange (New York: Macmillan, 1913).

62. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 50.

63. See, for example, Susan Hart, Annabelle Dixon, Mary Jane Drummond, and Donald McIntyre, *Learning without Limits* (Maidenhead, Berkshire, England: Open University Press, 2004).

As Dewey notes, certain forms of teaching that promote "routine habits," and thus mechanical thinking and doing, do not recognize human perfectibility as the power to learn and grow in diverse directions.[64] Rather, these forms contribute to miseducative experiences, and destructive struggle, as we defined above. In contrast, the recognition of human perfectibility means that the judgments and action of teachers must be such that the learners are left with increased options, increased openings to further develop their own perfectibility and their potential toward self-realization. Perfectibility implies a belief in the value of the diversity of human experience and the value of challenging, new, different, and unfamiliar experiences, which may interrupt us in educative ways that foster productive struggle and transformative growth. Further, it supports the belief that all children must be given access to such challenging learning experiences so that they can explore the limits of their knowledge and ability.

The shift in thinking required of teachers and other educators toward an asset view of all learners is "a moral act" through which inclusive practice can become the means for positive change to learners' school experiences.[65] On our account, teachers' recognition of the perfectibility of all learners is at the heart of supporting the thinking and practice associated with an asset view of children. Recognizing the perfectibility of learners means recognizing that each child has something — knowledge, ability, language, experiences, and ways of seeing the world — valuable to offer the educational situation. Educational relationships that support students to feel heard start with a recognition of the perfectibility of all learners. The teacher who recognizes perfectibility is curious to discover the child's unique contribution and seeks to create situations for learning in which this contribution can come to light. Such a teacher needs to have a disposition to listen. This second condition for the teacher is what we turn to next.

The Disposition to Listen: Empathic and Supportive Listening

Vignette Two. *Nicky, age sixteen, feels herself to be in a constant battle with the school system, ignored and bullied by teachers. It seems to her that no matter what she does, or what she says, she is never listened to, never helped with work, and seldom believed by those in authority. She struggles to understand how she has become "such a bad person" in the eyes of the school when, at home, she is loved and supported unconditionally. "I am always the same," she says, "I am just me." She describes how she feels "blocked out" in class on account of her being, just who she is. Sometimes this is not with words, rather she talks about the power of the teacher's "look," and as she speaks her voice changes strikingly to a dark mood:*

> *Nicky: "It feels like [she's ignoring me] cos she looks at me … and you know, she just doesn't pay much attention to me. [I feel] stupid. It's like, unwanted, like I'm not really meant to be at this school at all. It's like blocking me out."*

64. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 54.

65. Mel Ainscow, Tony Booth, and Alan Dyson, *Improving Schools, Developing Inclusion* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Discussing the listening of a teacher is complex, because listening can serve different purposes. In Nicky's case, the teacher's look had the effect of "blocking," or silencing Nicky; this teacher's "listening" is only there to ensure that Nicky, and her differences, were silent and *silenced*. On the other hand, teachers could put themselves in the position of a listener, by requiring students to speak. However, as we mentioned in the introduction, this could marginalize students who, for example, may have different cultural understandings of when to speak and when to listen, or who may be enacting their right to silence as a means of resisting the teacher's power and authority.[66] A different sense of teacher listening, is one that cultivates an environment in which learners have space to express themselves in order to learn. Teacher listening, in this sense, is an attitude of mind that attends to the speaker in a genuine manner and that respects the right of the speaker, as a valued member of the community, to hold and express opinions. The nature of such listening and its role in teaching and in the formation of ethical human relationships has increasingly become the subject of philosophical and empirical research, and a number of different ways of listening have been discussed in those contexts.[67] Drawing on this research, we recently developed the idea of "pedagogical listening" as a framework for teacher listening which seeks to understand and support students' speaking, listening, and specifically their expressions of *struggle* in classroom learning.[68] Pedagogical listening includes five

66. Kris Acheson, "Silence as Gesture: Rethinking the Nature of Communicative Silences," *Communication Theory* 18, no. 4 (2008): 535–555; Li, "Silences and Silencing Silences"; Forrest, "Practising Silence in Teaching"; and Ros Ollin, "Silent Pedagogy and Rethinking Classroom Practice: Structuring Teaching through Silence Rather than Talk," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 38, no. 2 (2008): 265–280.

67. There have been a few recent volumes in philosophy of education dedicated to the growing field of research on listening. One of these, a 2011 symposium in *Educational Theory*, examines particular philosophers' notions of listening, including how it helps form educational relationships: Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon and Megan J. Laverty, guest editors, "Philosophical Perspectives on Listening." Symposium issue, *Educational Theory* 61, no. 2 (2011). Another is a volume of essays, edited by Leonard Waks, that examines ideas of listening that inform well-known teaching approaches (for instance, Paolo Freire's critical pedagogy, or the Reggio Emilia approach): Leonard Waks, *Listening to Teach: Beyond Didactic Pedagogy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015). On listening in teaching, see, for example, Katherine Schultz, *Listening: A Framework for Teaching across Differences* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2003); Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon, "Listening to a Challenging Perspective: The Role of Interruption," *Teachers College Record* 112, no. 11 (2010): 2793–2814; Nicholas Burbules and Suzanne Rice, "Dialogue across Differences: Continuing the Conversation," *Harvard Educational Review* 61, no. 4 (1991): 393–417; and Hintz and Tyson, "Complex Listening."

68. We have introduced the full framework in Hintz, Tyson, and English, "Actualizing the Rights of the Learner." Significantly, although our research was focused on analyzing students verbalized struggles during mathematical discussion (for example, stating aloud what they are confused about, or expressing their ideas about a mathematical task), through observing classroom interaction and watching video of classrooms, we noticed other important indicators of whether a student was struggling productively or not, including students' nonverbal cues (facial expressions, gesture, posture) that may signal embodied affect, and verbal and nonverbal responses to the student from peers and teachers. In addition, in analyzing of our recall interviews with the focal classroom teachers who participated in this research, we found that they also attended to students' nonverbal expression as a means to understand the nature of student struggle, specifically, whether it was productive, unproductive, or potentially destructive. In episodes of teaching that we identified as cases of the teacher listening "pedagogically," it appeared that

"types" of teacher listening. Here, we focus on two of these five types, namely "empathic listening" and "supportive listening," that, in our view, particularly support educational relationships between teacher and learners in which students can feel heard. We also consider how pedagogical listening as a disposition to listen attends to student silence in supportive ways.

Pedagogical listening is a type of receptivity that involves learning from and with students. Learning from students is inherent in the idea of the teacher with a disposition to listen; teachers need to be able to attend to different views that they may not always wish to hear, including some that may run contrary to the more dominant discourse.[69] Central to building teacher–learner relationships wherein students are supported to feel heard is the idea of listening to learners' *empathically*, the first concept within our pedagogical listening framework.[70] Empathic listening refers to listening to understand things from the student's perspective while actively suspending one's own perspective, assumptions, or predetermined categories. Empathic listening, is different than a kind of rational critical "evaluative" listening so often found in schools. In exercising evaluative listening, teachers seek to hear right answers, or they filter what a student says with an aim of attending only to that which conforms to the teacher's preconceived notions of what is worth listening to.[71] In contrast, empathic listening is a type of "open listening," as Leonard Waks underscores.[72] There is an important connection between such open listening and students *feeling heard*: in the school context, such empathic listening can give teachers an understanding of features of expression characteristic of students who have unexpected, creative, or even deviant behaviors, features that might be "filtered out" in evaluative listening.[73]

teachers cared about this difference and aimed to help the learner or learners transform unproductive, or potentially destructive, struggle to productive forms of struggle. Further research into nonverbal communication of struggle is important, in particular in light of learners with additional needs who may communicate differently, as we discuss later in the essay.

69. Alison Cook-Sather, "Sound, Presence, and Power: 'Student Voice' in Educational Research and Reform," *Curriculum Inquiry* 36, no. 4 (2006): 359–390.

70. With this idea of empathic listening, we are drawing on Leonard Waks's concept of apophatic listening. See Leonard J. Waks, "Listening from Silence: Inner Composure and Engagement," *Paideusis: International Journal in Philosophy of Education* 17, no. 2 (2008): 65–74; Leonard J. Waks, "Two Types of Interpersonal Listening," *Teachers College Record* 112, no. 11 (2010): 2743–2762; and Leonard J. Waks, "Listening and Questioning: The Apophatic/Cataphatic Distinction Revisited," *Learning Inquiry* 1, no. 2 (2007): 153–161. See also Anthony G. Rud and Jim Garrison, "The Continuum of Listening," *Learning Inquiry* 1, no. 2 (2007): 163–168.

71. On this concept of "evaluative listening," see Brent A. Davis, "Listening for Differences: An Evolving Conception of Mathematics Teaching," *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education* 28, no. 3 (1997): 355; Brent A. Davis, "Mathematics Teaching: Moving from Telling to Listening," *Journal of Curriculum & Supervision* 9, no. 3 (1994): 267–283; Hintz, Tyson, and English, "Actualizing the Rights of the Learner"; and Hintz and Tyson, "Complex Listening." For a related concept of listening, see Waks, "Listening from Silence" and "Two Types of Interpersonal Listening."

72. Waks, "Listening from Silence."

73. Ibid., 71–72.

Thereby, empathic listening can allow students to feel "really listened to" and experience "profound appreciation," enhancing their self-esteem and sense of belonging.[74] We can illustrate such listening by turning to Ben's words.

Vignette Three. *Ben, age thirteen, describes how other students talk across him, as if he is not there, and how he is knocked by them in corridors and physically pushed to the edges, as if they are not even aware of his presence. In the classroom, teachers draw attention to his difference, in their manner of questioning him in front of the whole class as to why he uses an iPad, or by ignoring or refusing his requests for additional time to finish a task. Such behavior and attitudes cause Ben to question the value of his being and presence in the classroom and create barriers to his learning through marginalization and devaluing.*

By contrast, the teachers who appear to understand his unspoken difficulties, and who unobtrusively allow him extra time to finish the class task, or who offer unconditional support in any aspect of school life, change daily life for Ben. Here, he describes his experience with one teacher in particular:

> *Ben: "So he said, if there's anything troubling you in class you can come to me and tell me. … So I know I can go to him, if there's like any problems."*

Ben's words, "So I know I can go to him … " do not speak of a young person who is cowed and unable to move forward, but rather of one who feels supported and strengthened and recognized. It is the invitation by the teacher, articulated by Ben, "he said … you can come to me," which reflects a teacher who has listened and responded to Ben's unspoken need; a teacher who creates space for Ben to feel heard.

Equally important to building individual relationships with students through empathic listening is the teacher's ability to support each student to build relationships with their peers. *Supportive listening* is a type of teacher listening that describes what teachers do when listening to multiple students' ideas over time to try to find links between these, so as to build educational student–student relationships.[75] Supportive listening occurs when teachers listen for ways to support students to listen to one another, so they consider and learn from perspectives other than their own.[76] In such listening, teachers are not necessarily seeking to only locate what is "common" among learners; rather, they are open to finding what is uncommon and determining, for example, how one student's ideas can support, or even challenge, another student to expand his or her knowledge or ability.

Supportive listening in this way provides learners the necessary space to allow themselves to be "interrupted" by the differences brought forth in encounters with

74. Ibid., 72.

75. Hintz and Tyson, "Complex Listening"; and Hintz, Tyson, and English, "Actualizing the Rights of the Learner."

76. Hintz, Tyson, and English, "Actualizing the Rights of the Learner."

others — in this case, their peers in the classroom — in the educative ways we described above. This means that through the teacher's enactment of supportive listening, each learner learns to recognize the perfectibility of their peers, seeing them as persons they can learn from. This includes helping each learner learn to be open to diverse perspectives — even those that contradict one's own perspective, that are anomalous, or that may cause confusion — and to genuinely consider these as valuable to one's own thinking. In this way, the teacher creates relationships among students, wherein they can be catalysts for productive struggle for one another.

Pedagogical Listening, Silence, and Gesture. Empathic and supportive listening, as forms of pedagogical listening, are particularly important in terms of inclusive education when we consider how the "voices" of those who have been marginalized or who communicate differently can be brought forward into the arena of learning.[77] While all learners in schools can feel a sense of injustice at times when they are not heard, vulnerable learners, who may have different perceptions and understandings of others' motives and intentions, can feel such injustice more keenly. A young person with social communication difficulties, or emotional issues, may see the causes for someone's actions as within herself. In cases where young people look to their teachers for support, encouragement, help, and understanding, but do not receive it, the feelings of personal rejection are strong. This "looking to" is the call of the Other, in a Levinasian sense. For a teacher to deny the learner's call by not listening or not attending to the learner is a turning away from the humanity of the learner.

While "listening to" may imply that it is the sound of voices that is attended to, pedagogical listening also involves attending to the absence of voices. This means attention to the fullness of human communication, which extends beyond sound to include silences, expression, gesture, movement, body language, and all other manner in which human beings communicate social-emotional and academic struggles.[78] There are many in school whose voices are not heard, and children with additional needs are among those, either because they are unable to speak or articulate their thoughts, or they do not feel they have the time and space to do so, or they choose not to do so for a number of different reasons. Listening pedagogically means having a disposition to attend to the silence of these voices, and to counter any deficit view of such young people as having nothing interesting to say, as not deserving to be listened to, or as being too "difficult" to engage with.

77. Teresa Whitehurst, "Liberating Silent Voices? Perspectives of Children with Profound and Complex Learning Needs on Inclusion," *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 35, no. 1 (2007): 55–61.

78. On this point, see Acheson, "Silence as Gesture"; Eva Alerby and Jo'runn Eli'do'ttir Alerby, "The Sounds of Silence: Some Remarks on the Value of Silence in the Process of Reflection in Relation to Teaching and Learning," *Reflective Practice* 4, no. 1 (2003): 41–51; and Katherine Schultz, "After the Blackbird Whistles: Listening to Silence in Classrooms," *Teachers College Record* 112, no. 11 (2010): 2833–2849.

By having a disposition to listen pedagogically, teachers contribute to the rehumanization of education.[79] Their acts of listening move beyond the notion of "giving a student a voice," that is, providing the opportunity for the student, as an individual, to "air one's views." Pedagogical listening involves, in particular, a disposition to be attentive and responsive not just to the words, but to the whole being of a young person. To do this requires creating the space and ethos needed to establish a safe, trusting atmosphere in which all students can experience embodied affective and cognitive dimensions of productive struggle. Pedagogical listening measures the environment, not the child. It aims to determine whether the environment offers all learners ways to express themselves, to convey their social or academic struggles and to be recognized and responded to respectfully. Listening as a teacher can thereby build a community in which diversity is valued and each learner is positioned competently. This idea of building community is one we turn to next.

Building Community: Responsibility to the Other

Vignette Four. *For Leah, also discussed in Vignette One, unlike for some of her peers, the community of the school acted collectively to become an "agent of change." Teachers worked to change the pathway of Leah's life by listening to her and by ensuring that opportunities were created for her to learn and to flourish, to become a strong young woman, whose hidden talents and gifts were nurtured and celebrated. Such an approach brought about a gradual, positive shift in her self-perception, in that she became able to see herself not as without value, but as someone of unique value, who brought something very special to the school and the world. She recalls one experience in particular, when she had been asked by the school to help another pupil.*

> *Leah: "It was actually in third year, I actually did get asked to tutor someone on my iPad. My face apparently went really red and really happy. My eyes apparently glittered and I went, " Yeeee!" [Her voice is very high on this last word, indicating excitement and happiness.] I thought that would never happen. Never, I thought, because of this, I'm never going … some people are really smart and so they tutor and I got asked to [her voice rises suddenly] tutor someone! [she is almost breathless]."*

It is the recognition of her value in the eyes of others that is the most striking in her words. She has a deep satisfaction at being in a position to be able to help someone else. As she expresses it, the recognition from her peers and teachers was profoundly affecting.

> *Leah: "It made me, it actually made me feel more like I was like everybody else. Was being judged as a human being, not as a person with a disability."*

79. The notion of rehumanization of education for students who have been historically marginalized has been an important expanding discourse in mathematics education, in particular. See, for example, Imani Goffney, Rochelle Gutiérrez, and Melissa Boston, eds., *Rehumanizing Mathematics for Black, Indigenous, and Latinx Students* (Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2018); and Cathery Yeh, Mark Ellis, and Dina Mahmood, "From the Margin to the Center: A Framework for Rehumanizing Mathematics Education for Students with Dis/Abilities," *Journal of Mathematical Behavior* 58 (June 2020): 100758.

Inclusive education as a practice means, in Mel Ainscow's words, "reaching out to all learners" in recognition of their value in the community of the school. Such a "reaching out" involves teachers inviting learners into the community of the class and the school to become participants in "a dynamic process of social interaction."[80] The teacher's capacity to build community forms our third condition for the teacher. The capacity to build community among all learners in the classroom brings together the two other conditions discussed, in that it involves the teacher's disposition to listen and the recognition of learners' perfectibility. The teacher, in building a community in the classroom, is building a space in which all— not just those with the power that can come from being from a dominant group — are enabled to speak; to voice their struggles, confusions, and discontinuities in learning; to have their opinions heard and respected; and to have opportunities to explore and expand their horizon of meaning. This idea of community relates to what Crystal Kalinec-Craig calls a "safe space" in which learners' thinking is "valued and respected," including their expressions of "confusions and mistakes"; the learner's right to such a safe space is the basis for all other rights of the learner.[81]

The capacity to build community demands that teachers have a view of whose voices are being left out and of who (if anyone) is being silenced, and that they can address the needs of those learners, as well as the needs of the group as a whole.[82] Accomplishing this entails that the teacher empowers students to view themselves and others as perfectible, that is, as capable of learning from difference. In this way, the teacher creates and supports an ethos in which everyone in the classroom is valued and is supported in responding to acts of marginalization with a critical voice.

Inclusive education discourse contributes to this idea of building community, as it has explicitly challenged the "silos of thinking"[83] that have allowed some young people to continue to be viewed through a deficit lens. Further, research in inclusive education has developed the idea of the teacher as an "agent of change"[84] who can disrupt deficit thinking. This idea of the teacher is an important aspect of the capacity to build community. Having the capacity to build community requires teachers to shift away from both tacit and explicit weighting given to academic achievement, whereby subtle signs (such as "the look" described by

80. Mel Ainscow, "Reaching Out to All Learners: Some Lessons from International Experience," *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 11, no. 1 (2000): 1–19.

81. Kalinec-Craig, "The Rights of the Learner," 4, 7.

82. Here, we build on English's notion of this teacher capacity. See English, "Dialogic Teaching and Moral Learning."

83. Jennifer Carol Spratt and Lani Florian, "Developing and Using a Framework for Gauging the Use of Inclusive Pedagogy by New and Experienced Teachers," in *Measuring Inclusive Education*, ed. Chris Forlin and Tim Loreman (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group, 2014), 263–278.

84. Nataša Pantić, "A Model for Study of Teacher Agency for Social Justice," *Teachers and Teaching* 21, no. 6 (2015): 759–778; and Nataša Pantić and Lani Florian, "Developing Teachers as Agents of Inclusion and Social Justice," *Education Inquiry* 6, no. 3 (2015): 333–351.

Nicky) are given to those who do not "learn" quickly (in the sense of acquiring new knowledge) or who have learning differences. Such signs imply to individual learners that they are in some way of less value than those that easily achieve academically. Moreover, such emphasis on academic achievement can stifle the development of social relationships between students, and thereby hinder the building of community.

At the heart of the teacher's capacity in building community is the ability to recognize and respond to the Other — the learner — as unique and uniquely valuable in the community. Teachers, on this view, have a "responsibility for the Other," to use Emmanuel Levinas's idea in a broad, universal sense. This means that the teacher is not only called by the presence of the learner, as Other, to respond to the Other's being, but also that the teacher can only bring the uniqueness of the Other *into being* by means of her response to that call. Answering the call of the Other responsively and responsibly involves a sense of preoccupation with oneself as a teacher. The teacher has a constant self-reflective view of the interconnectedness of her being as a teacher and that of the learner as Other ("I exist" in my role as a teacher "through the Other and for the Other").[85]

Learning to respond to the call of the Learner is, as we see it, a necessary part of becoming a teacher who can build relationships that support students to feel heard: it demands an openness to possibility that sees beyond the limits imposed on learners' through labels. Such responsiveness can only occur when teachers are prepared not only to learn *from* learners, but also to learn and be "*with* learners,"[86] empathically seeing a view of the world from the perspective of learners' questions, doubts, discontinuities, and struggles.

The Risk of Teaching: Supporting Environments for Feeling Heard *and* Productive Struggle

Educational relationships for feeling heard, as we have argued, are at the foundation of creating environments for productive struggle. Yet, this is not to say that such relationships have to be fully established prior to engaging students in productive struggle (which would hardly be possible in practice). Rather, building such educational relationships and engaging students in productive struggle are mutually supportive dimensions of reflective teaching practice. Educational relationships can be built up by means of productively challenging learners in a caring way and by giving them space to understand what it means to struggle in learning, and what the positive nature of productive struggle looks and feels like for them. In this way, teachers can empower each learner to determine what counts for him or her as productive, unproductive, or even destructive. Thereby, learners' engagement in productive struggle as part of transformative learning experiences can be a means toward building the relationships whereby they can come to feel heard:

85. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer 1991).

86. English, "Dialogic Teaching and Moral Learning."

in offering opportunities to struggle productively, teachers are "telling" students that they are valuable and worthy of quality education that fosters their thinking and growth as human beings.

However, as we mentioned above, teaching that supports productive struggle for all learners is challenging. In this section, we address a particular challenge to teachers that we call "the risk to become vulnerable." Just as learners are taking a risk when engaging in productive struggle, teachers, when fostering environments for productive struggle, are also taking a risk, but in a different way than learners. Teaching that supports productive struggle, on our view, is that which aims to create paths for the learner to reflect on the limits of her interaction with the world — her difficulties, problems, or uncertainties — and to engage in productive interplay with these discontinuities in her own experiences. Such teaching, as Egon Schütz describes, seeks to "awaken and encourage" a learner's capacity for self-transformation, a capacity Schütz refers to as a person's ability "to transformatively reposition oneself to the world" (*Umzudisponieren*).[87] However, in this process, the teacher must also be "awake," that is, self-reflective about the fact that she may not know exactly *how* to challenge a learner to engage in productive struggle, since, for example, a particular math problem that is straightforward for one child may be overwhelming for another. The teacher must be able to confront herself, specifically, the limits of her own knowledge and ability. In doing so, teachers risk feeling exposed to learners, to other educators, or to themselves. They may come to realize they have not yet had the opportunity to develop the depth of content knowledge needed to make pedagogical decisions regarding, for example, how to teach that content, how to educatively address the impact of the differences between their own and the learner's cultural or linguistic background, or how to attend to the uniqueness of a particular learner.

On this view, both teacher and learner are "Other" to one another.[88] This means that the teacher brings something new to the learner's situation of learning with the intent of widening his or her meaning horizon. The learner also brings something new to the teacher's situation of teaching, that is, the learner brings her world, her knowledge, her experiences, and her abilities that are unique and valuable. In this way, both teacher and learner are vulnerable to interruption by the newness, uniqueness, and difference each brings to the educational situation.

The Complexity of Feeling Heard

From our discussion above, we believe that a closer articulation of what it means for a student to feel heard is possible. When a student is able to "feel

87. Egon Schütz, *Freiheit und Bestimmung. Sinntheoretische Reflexionen zum Bildungsproblem* [Freedom and Determination: Theoretical Reflections on the Problem of Education] (Düsseldorf-Benrath: Henn, 1975), 212 (translation by coauthor, Andrea English).

88. Dietrich Benner, "'Der Andere' und 'Das Andere' als Problem und Aufgabe von Erziehung und Bildung" [The Other as Person and the Other as Object: A Problem and Task for Teaching and Education], *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 45, no. 3 (1999): S. 315–327 (translation by coauthor, Andrea English).

heard," she feels and lives the fact that her presence as a person is valuable in the community of the classroom and school, no matter what other markers she has been identified by. She is able to develop that "sense of belonging" that Warnock identified as so crucial to our human development within communities of education.[89] Or, to put it another way, she feels the sense of "home"[90] without which no education could be described as "inclusive." The type of educational relationships we have sought to describe are *reciprocal* ethical relations. Much like Nel Noddings's notion of caring as reciprocal, in that the cared-for must acknowledge the carer's act as "caring,"[91] so too, on our account, an educational relationship that aims to support students to feel heard is validated as truly supportive of feeling heard *only* when the learner acknowledges it as such.

It can be seen from the words of the young people in the vignettes above that they feel on occasion marginalized, disempowered, and deprived of rich opportunities to learn within their schools. When schools are structured in ways that deny learners the opportunity for quality transformative learning experiences — those that engender productive struggle — learners can feel, to use Ruth Cigman's words, as if they are merely physically present in the school building but are not part of the school community.[92] This occurs through a number of everyday interactions, the significance of which is frequently unrecognized by teachers and peers alike. To use the terms we have presented in this essay, we view the students' voices in the vignettes above as expressing both the problems within teacher–learner relationships that do not support students to feel heard, and the profound possibilities within those relationships that do. Only the latter can be considered "educational" relationships.

Conclusion

As we have discussed, struggle is an integral part of transformative learning, and without struggle, we might argue that there is no learning. Too often, education systems on the whole fail to offer some young people opportunities to engage in productive struggle, and in turn impose limitations on these learners. This experience can leave them feeling abandoned, hopeless, and helpless in their education. By building educational relationships that support students to feel heard within an environment where their particular academic and social–emotional struggles are valued, teachers can empower students to view their own uniqueness, and that of others, as integral to the learning community.

89. Warnock and Norwich, *Special Educational Needs*.

90. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*.

91. Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013); and Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, 2nd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005).

92. Ruth Cigman, *Included or Excluded? The Challenge of the Mainstream for Some SEN Children* (London: Routledge, 2006).

At present, while international bodies and national educational policies support the principle of inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all learners, current provision is variable. Inclusive education is still seen by many as simply the physical placement of students with additional or special needs in mainstream classrooms. Such a limited view falls far short of the notion of opening educational opportunities for all. It is possible to create communities where students feel heard, meaning that their whole being, presence, and contributions matter and can bring something uniquely important to the community. Here, we have moved toward establishing a more concrete idea of what feeling heard might mean for students and why it is an important educational criterion for defining what counts as an *educational* relationship. We believe that more research that captures students' voices and lived experiences in school is needed to understand the human embodied phenomenon of feeling heard so that researchers, policymakers, and practitioners can *hear* students and understand the relationships they need to support them through the journey of schooling.

Clearly, creating the sort of educational relationships that support young people such that they "feel heard" and are able to struggle productively takes a great deal of time, patience, and care, particularly in the case of learners who have been frequently let down or rejected. In order to build such relationships, teachers themselves need support: support from within the school, from the local community, and, indeed, from the wider society. *Teachers need to feel heard as well*. It is not just attitudes and deficit perspectives that must change, but also the manner in which teaching is approached. This calls not only for a pedagogy that is inclusive and recognizes the perfectibility of all learners, but also for a flexible approach to curriculum that allows for teachers to listen and be responsive to diverse students, to provide space for all learners to become part of the community, and to foster rich situations for the experience of challenge and productive struggle.

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